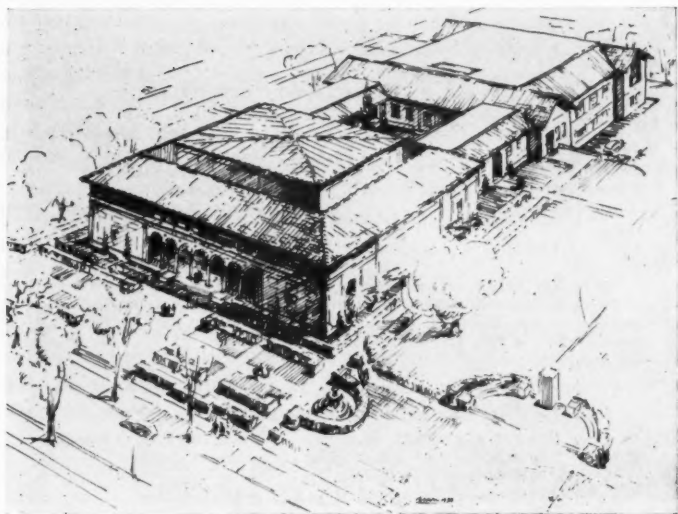


BULLETIN OF THE  
ALLEN MEMORIAL ART MUSEUM  
OBERLIN, OHIO



THE DUDLEY PETER ALLEN MEMORIAL ART  
BUILDING AND THE DEPARTMENT OF  
FINE ARTS AT OBERLIN COLLEGE

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Director of the Art Museum, Chairman

#### PUBLICATIONS

The Museum Bulletin and catalogues for special exhibitions are published at irregular intervals and are sent free to all members of the Oberlin Friends of Art. They may be purchased separately.

Photographs and post cards of museum objects are on sale at the Museum. Orders by mail are invited.

#### MUSEUM HOURS

Weekdays, 1:30 P.M. to 4:30 P.M.

Evenings, 7:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. Except  
Saturday and Sunday.

Sundays, 2:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M.

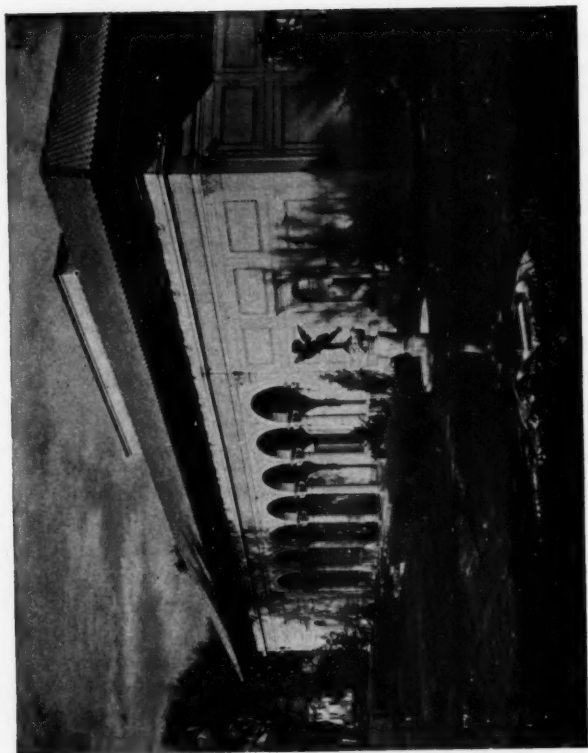
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## Foreword

This number of the Bulletin is not primarily intended for the general reader. Rather, it is written to answer some of the questions which have been asked concerning the Allen Memorial Art Building and its equipment, the curriculum of the art department, and the content and purpose of the museum. Many of these questions have been of a technical nature and it has seemed wise to publish the following detailed account in the hope that it may not only supply the answers to them but may also be of service to any institution planning a building or buildings for similar purposes. Because I have been the head of the Department of Fine Arts at Oberlin and director of the museum since 1916, at which time the building was under construction, and because I was myself the designer of much of its equipment and of the additions made to it, it seemed logical that I should be the author of this account. I am, however, only the spokesman for the members of my staff, both past and present. Their ideas, quite as much as mine, are embodied in the present building. In fact, the counsel of two of my earlier colleagues, Emeritus Professors Charles Beebe Martin and Eva M. Oakes was of great importance in the preparation of the original plans, which antedated my coming to Oberlin. Four others, Emeritus Professor Jessie B. Trefethen, Professor Margaret Schauffler, Professor Edward Capps, Jr., and the curator of the museum, Mrs. Hazel B. King, were members of the staff when the important additions of 1937 were made, and their suggestions and advice were of the greatest value in the design of these additions. The present librarian and instructor, Miss Ellen Johnson, and one of the younger members of the staff, Mr. Paul Arnold, have both had a share in planning the subsequent decoration and equipment of the building and the curriculum of the department. Thus the Dudley Peter Allen Memorial Art Building and the Department of Fine Arts of Oberlin College may truly be termed a co-operative enterprise.

CLARENCE WARD, *Professor of the History and  
Appreciation of Art, Director of the Art Museum*

Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio, September 1947



*Fig. 1. The Dudley Peter Allen Memorial Art Building*

## The Dudley Peter Allen Memorial Art Building and The Department of Fine Arts at Oberlin College

The fine arts have had a long history at Oberlin. For more than a century, instruction in them has had a place in the curriculum. The first courses were, of course, of the simplest sort but, by the early years of the present century, much more advanced work was offered both in the history and practice of art. The then Dean of Women in the college, Mrs. Adelia A. Field Johnston, and the distinguished Professor of Greek, Charles Beebe Martin, deserve the major credit for encouraging the interest in art history, while Professor Eva M. Oakes was at the same time raising the standard of teaching in drawing, painting and design. Both of the latter were in the midst of their teaching careers when, in 1916, Dr. Dudley Peter Allen, one of the Trustees of the college and a distinguished Cleveland surgeon, offered to erect a building for the growing department. Shortly before this, Oberlin had accepted the Charles F. Olney collection of paintings and *objets d'art* and at almost the same time, it had received the Charles M. Hall bequest of a valuable collection of oriental rugs and Chinese porcelains. That these collections and the department might be suitably housed, Mr. Cass Gilbert of New York, who was then the college architect, was asked to design an art building. But before these plans were entirely completed, Dr. Allen died. Very happily for Oberlin, Mrs. Allen not only decided to erect the building in his memory but endowed a professorship in Fine Arts with the funds which her husband had planned to use for his original gift. Nor was this the extent of her generosity. Although not herself an Oberlin graduate, Mrs. Allen, who later became Mrs. Francis Fleury Prentiss, continued her benefactions to the college, including a gift in 1937 of more than \$100,000 for an addition to the art building. With this generous gift, the building was almost doubled in size and equipped

for teaching with the latest material, much of it especially designed for this particular purpose. To complete her long-time interest in this one of her many benefactions, Mrs. Prentiss bequeathed nearly half a million dollars to the college for use by the department and the museum and left to its collections many of the finest prints and a number of the outstanding paintings in her own personal possession.

From this brief account of its history, it will be seen that Oberlin has been most fortunate in having so generous a donor to implement its work in the fine arts. Happily, others have followed her example, particularly in building up the museum. Mention of some of these will be found later in this article.

In order that there may be some system in what follows, this Bulletin will deal first with the building in general, then with its separate parts and the function and equipment of each of these, and finally, with the departmental curriculum and the place of the fine arts in the college as a whole.

#### THE BUILDING IN GENERAL

Mr. I. T. Frary published a careful description of the plan and appearance of the building as finished in 1917 in the *Architectural Record* for August 1918. The interior has since then undergone many changes, but the exterior remains in large part as originally erected. A brief description to supplement the view from the west (fig. 1) will be sufficient here. The style is that of the Early Italian Renaissance and the façade is strongly reminiscent of Brunelleschi's Loggia degli Innocenti in Florence. The material is mainly a buff sandstone from nearby quarries. To this, the pink marble columns and balustrades of the portico, the panels of red sandstone, the terra cotta *stemme* of the frieze and "della Robbia" lunette over the door add both refinement and color. This color is further enhanced by the blue and yellow of the overhanging cornice and the red tile of the roof. A broad grass terrace, with a pattern of red brick walks and privet hedges, runs entirely across the front of the building. At its southern end is an exact replica of the fountain in the cortile of the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, the gift of Mr. Henry J. Haskell of Kansas



*Fig. 2.* Garden Court

City as a memorial to his wife, Katharine Wright Haskell. The open cloister court between the museum and the studio building (fig. 2) is laid out as a small garden around a central fountain. On the wall of the studio is a bronze plaque in memory of Dean Johnston. The colonnades were originally

open but in 1937 offices and a seminar were built along them on the north and south. The cloister itself is frequently used for study and sometimes for classes.

Of the two original buildings, the one to the west was much the larger. It was about 100x110 feet in size and was planned to contain the museum, the library and two departmental classrooms. Externally, it remains substantially unchanged. The smaller building, built along the east side of the court, was approximately one hundred feet in length but only twenty-five feet wide and a single story in height. It was planned for work in the practice of art and contained three studios, a locker room, an office and a small space for unpacking exhibitions and for general utility purposes.

The whole formed such a unified architectural design as to present a real problem when the question of additions arose. Since it was naturally desirable to retain this unity insofar as possible, these additions were carefully subordinated to the existing structure. They consisted first, in the erection of wings along the colonnaded porticos as already mentioned, and second, in extending the entire studio wing to the east until it formed a single block approximately one hundred feet on a side. By taking advantage of the natural contour of the ground, it was possible to erect this last addition in two full stories thus gaining a large amount of well lighted interior space without making the building so high as to injure the appearance of the museum proper. The general view of the entire unit as seen from the southeast (fig. 3) shows the appearance of these additions. While planned to harmonize with the portions already standing, they have been given a somewhat more modern and functional design.

Planning a building for the fine arts presents many interesting problems. When the Allen Art Building was originally erected in 1916-1917, the department was still relatively small, the collections exceedingly modest, and the requirements not so exacting as they had become by 1937. Mr. Gilbert's plan was, therefore, in general adequate. But it did not provide for the rather phenomenal growth of the department from one of the





*Fig. 3. View from Southeast*

smallest to one of the largest in the college, nor for a corresponding increase in the art collections and material equipment. When, therefore, Mrs. Prentiss so generously offered to supply the funds for extensive additions, an effort was made to combine these with such alterations in the original buildings as would produce a unified plant, not only adequate for present needs, but providing as well for some future expansion. The problem was also presented of obtaining the maximum of convenience and efficiency in the combined buildings without making the changes in the existing units unduly expensive. Moreover the plan was to install in them, if possible, the latest and finest equipment,—either already available or capable of being made,—for exhibition, study and teaching. One circumstance aided greatly in achieving such results as were achieved. Mrs. Prentiss, President Wilkins and the Trustees of the college all had sufficient confidence in the judgment of the members of the department and museum staff to leave virtually the entire planning of the changes and additions to them. The writer, as head of the department and director of the museum, was asked to make the plans, and the entire project was carried out under his direction and that of the college Superintendent of Building Construction, Mr. Robert Cutler. This arrangement was particularly fortunate in that it made alterations possible even while the building was being erected without the heavy expense which such alterations usually involve.

As has been stated above, the completed building needed to provide for the three principal functions of a fine arts department, namely, adequate galleries for the exhibition of both permanent and loan collections, suitable space for study, and facilities for instruction both in the history and practice of art. In other words, it had to be a combination museum, library, studio and recitation building. In addition to these requirements there had to be provision for storage, offices and work-rooms, besides the necessary space for a large amount of mechanical equipment. Moreover, as has been stated, the relations between all these had to be studied with a view to convenience and economy of operation while taking into account

the limitations presented by the already existing buildings. The plan as finally carried out is shown in figure 4 (pages 60 and 61). It was the result of many consultations and much consideration on the part of the entire staff and the members of the general Committee on the Location, Plans, and Construction of College Buildings. The detailed account which follows takes up this plan in its relation to the three-fold purpose of the building as outlined above and includes a description of such pieces of equipment as are unusual or original in design or installation.

#### THE MUSEUM

There are three primary requirements in the plan of an art museum. The first of these is for exhibition space, the second for storage and the third for offices and workrooms. Each presents its own problems and these cannot be said to have been entirely satisfactorily solved at Oberlin.

The central room in the Allen Memorial Museum (fig. 5) is an enclosed cortile running the full height of the building and approximately forty feet in all three of its dimensions. This opens, through three arches on each side, into a groined vaulted corridor about ten feet wide. From this, in turn, doorways give access to the various rooms and passages of the ground floor. The court and corridors afford the principal space available for large objects as well as virtually the only place in the entire building for exhibition cases. Unfortunately the corridors are very badly lighted, especially in the corners, and the arches and doorways in them and in the main court take up so much room as to leave little available wall space. Moreover, the monumental character of the court itself, with its richly painted clearstory and ceiling, tends to distract attention from the objects displayed in it. In earlier years these were largely casts and this distraction was not serious but, when the college began to acquire really significant original works, the problem arose of housing and lighting them in such a way as to make them the center of attention. To do this, special cases (fig. 5) were designed to fit the spaces available and built locally from specifications prepared by the author in collaboration with the



*Fig. 5.* Corner of Sculpture Court

curator of the museum, Mrs. Hazel B. King. These cases are of waxed gumwood panels and of two principal types, some, open, for the display of the larger pieces of sculpture, others, with plate glass fronts and ends, for all sorts of smaller or more fragile objects (fig. 6). All are lighted with concealed fluores-



*Fig. 6. Sculpture Court Corridor*

cent tubes beneath overhanging canopies which themselves afford a horizontal line around the room and thus tend to fix the visitor's attention approximately at eye level. All cases are also built independently of the wall behind them and can thus be moved about as desired. Beautiful features of the corridors

are the two pairs of wrought iron gates (fig. 7) the work of the late Samuel Yellin of Philadelphia.

Designed as they were in 1916, the galleries for paintings were of the lofty type, with overhead skylights and concealed reflectors, which were then the fashion. Three such galleries, the largest sixty feet in length, the other two half this size, were provided in Mr. Gilbert's plans. They afford striking and impressive space for the exhibition of pictures but their excessive height is wasteful of space in these days when paintings are hung, when possible, in a single row. Their height also makes impossible that sense of intimacy which enhances the beauty of small pictures or those which are best appreciated at close range. To compensate somewhat for this lack of intimacy, especially in the large gallery, partitions about six feet wide and ten feet high have been set up at intervals along the walls thus breaking the long gallery into three separate spaces. Each of these has then been devoted to paintings and other works of a single period or style. (Fig. 8). This arrangement is only partially successful and plans are already under consideration by which this gallery would be floored over at one half its height thus providing an unbroken room upstairs and a series of artificially lighted small rooms on the ground floor.

The walls of all four painting galleries are covered with a continuous expanse of coarse monkscloth. While very effective when newly hung, this form of wall covering is of doubtful value in such a region as northern Ohio where there is so much smoke and dirt. It has had to be repainted on several occasions and is now so heavy as to be somewhat insecure. Painting has also destroyed much of its original texture. It would, perhaps, have been wiser, if such a covering were used at all, to have confined it to the lower portion of the walls.

Opening off the sculpture court on the main axis of the building is a room, twenty by forty feet in size which was originally intended for the library. (Fig. 9). This soon proved totally inadequate for the rapidly growing collection of books which gradually spread into the offices and even the hallways throughout the building. In 1937, these books were moved to



*Fig. 7.* Corridor Gates

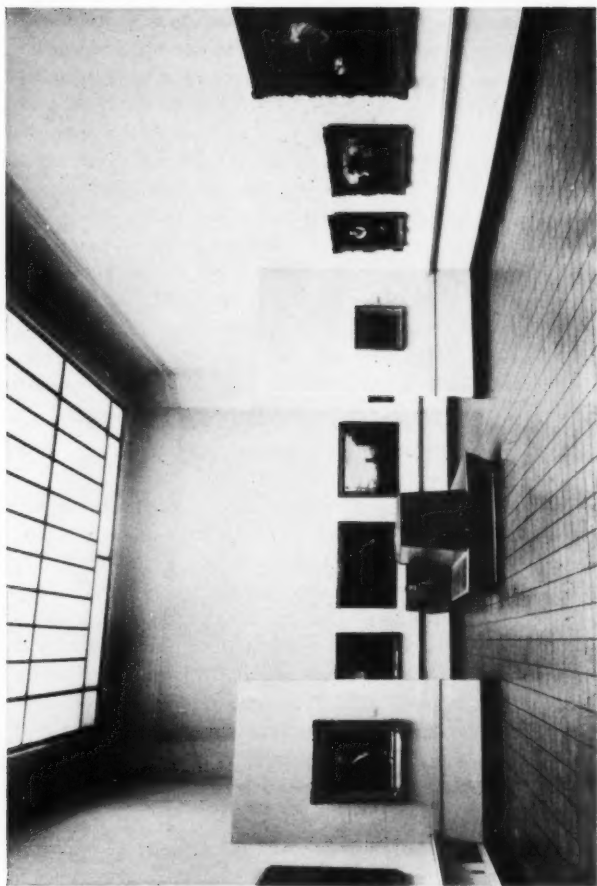
the second floor and the former library space transformed into a room for the housing and display of prints and other similar uses. This transformation proved interesting. By leaving the original finely designed walnut bookcases in place, and making removable wooden panels to cover them, an excellent background was provided for the display of prints while, at the same time the spaces formerly occupied by folio volumes were fitted with doors and thus provided housing for the print collection. Moreover, by removing the former book shelves and lining the compartments which they had occupied with suitable material, these were made into permanent exhibition cases. Glass panel fronts were then constructed which could replace those of walnut, and movable backs were also made which permitted an arrangement of cases of varied depth. These false backs are particularly useful where a shallow space is desired for exhibitions of laces and similar materials. The table in the center of the room was especially designed to accommodate classes in the graphic arts up to twenty-five in number. It has also been fitted with two storage cabinets for large prints and manuscript pages.

The room itself has proved very well suited for many purposes other than those for which it was planned. Departmental meetings and teas are frequently held here and the entire college has made extensive use of it for committee and board meetings, conferences and social gatherings.

The sculpture court, painting galleries and the print room, which have just been described, afford almost the entire space available for exhibition purposes. There is a small amount of wall in the corridors but these are very badly lighted and difficult to guard. With its greatly increased collections, provision of additional galleries is, perhaps, the building's most pressing need.

Scarcely second in importance to galleries is a proper provision for storage, which should be nearly as great as that for exhibition purposes. Moreover, such storage space should be conveniently located and should be heated and ventilated in such a manner that it can be kept at the proper degree of tem-





*Fig. 8. Large Picture Gallery*

perature and humidity. In all this the original building was sadly deficient. Mr. Gilbert's plan provided only the very nearly inaccessible unfinished space above the entrance portico for storage purposes. Unfortunately, also, because drainage has always presented difficulties in the level terrain of Oberlin, the basements of both buildings were left almost completely unexcavated. As the collections grew, the need for storerooms was compelling and, at the same time, the material to be stored was of an increasingly higher quality. After careful study, it was found possible to excavate under the large picture gallery and under a portion of the old studio wing. As a result, there are now three storage rooms in the basement, but these are very unsatisfactorily situated and it is impossible to keep them properly heated and ventilated. More than this, they lack suitable racks, cupboards and other provisions for the proper care of the objects placed in them. Here is another important need to be cared for in any future expansion.

The efficient operation of a museum also requires properly situated space for the reception and shipment of goods, unpacking and packing, and for the storage of lumber, boxes and other material. There should also be a large workshop, well equipped with tools and machines, to handle the many jobs necessary in the care of an art building and its collections. The original plans scarcely took these needs into account. As a matter of fact, even the doorways in the museum are too small and the stairway too low to allow any really large object to be brought into the building. When the model of the Chinese temple was shown in the sculpture court some time ago, the transom of one door had to be sawed away and even then the model had to be largely dismantled before it could be put in place.

The alterations and additions of 1937 made some improvements in the matter of utility space. A new basement room under the studio wing now gives direct access to the out-of-doors for shipping and receiving, and a shop of modest proportions, with a small room for the care of objects as they are unpacked or awaiting shipment, opens directly from it below



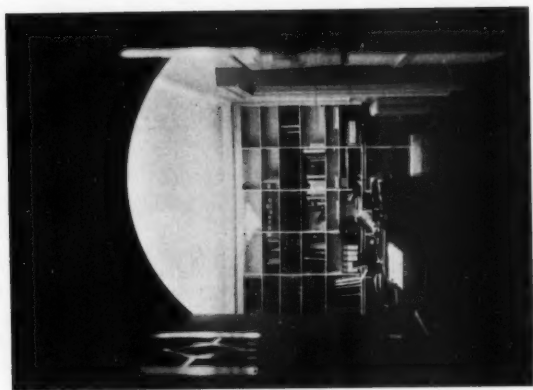
*Fig. 9. Print Room*

the new wing along the south side of the cloister court. This, in turn, connects with the former utility room under the museum proper. There is need, however, for additional shop space, machinery and tools, and the provision for the storage of boxes and packing material is far from adequate.

The third major need of a museum is for suitable administrative space and equipment. The museum staff at Oberlin consists of the director and his secretary, the curator and her assistant, an evening attendant and two caretakers whose duty it is to look after the building as a whole. These may be added the librarian and the members of her staff, though the library is more intimately connected with the department than with the museum proper.

Since the director is also the head of the department, his office is in a way the center of the entire plant. That his quarters might be as accessible as possible, they have been placed off the north corridor just inside one of the two main entrances. They consist of a suite of three rooms. The first (fig. 10) is a general reception room for visitors and the place in which much of the business of the museum and department is carried on. A small strong room, a lavatory and a kitchenette open from this outer office, the last of these adding greatly to the social life of the building by making possible light refreshment between classes as well as almost daily afternoon teas. The latter are a long standing custom and all members of the staff and graduate students are welcome to them. Their importance as a unifying influence is really significant. A small work room containing the office files, a mimeograph machine and other equipment also opens from this outer office to the west while a large double door gives access to the director's office on the opposite side. (Fig. 11).

This office was added in 1937. It is a square room, finished in mahogany and with a low plaster dome for semi-indirect lighting. Three of the pieces of furniture are of the early nineteenth century, the gift of an Oberlin alumnus as is also the interesting Caucasian rug. The walls are at present hung with particularly fine engravings and etchings from the Prentiss bequest.



*Fig. 10. Office*



*Fig. 11. Office of Director*

The room contains some unusual electrical equipment. Behind the desk is a panel controlling an elaborate sound system by which it is possible for the director to make his voice heard in any room in the building, pick up and transmit any radio program or record in a similar manner, or listen to lectures being given in any of the lecture rooms or studios. There is also a portable two-way wireless which can be used for conversation with his secretary or between any two rooms in the building. In addition to these there is an intercommunicating telephone system and the usual outside telephone.

Across the cloister court and directly opposite the director's office is that of the curator. (Fig. 12). This is finished in a more modern manner with light maple furniture and a black and white mastic tile floor. Next to it is a small room originally planned for the exhibition of textiles and similar material but now used principally by the assistant to the curator for museum files and the general work of cataloging and caring for the collection.

A work room not far from the curator's office completes the space for administrative purposes. Unfortunately, it is far too small for its uses for it now houses two large cedar closets for rugs, costumes and textiles besides a numerous collection of pedestals, stands and other equipment used in setting up exhibits. It is also the only available place for handling works of art preparatory to their being shown or stored. Any new addition should surely provide additional space for these purposes.

While the principal object of a museum is to afford the proper setting for the display of works of art it has other functions almost as important. This is especially true in a college where such a museum is the laboratory for the department of fine arts. Foremost of these functions is that of a well planned annual program of exhibitions both of the objects owned by the college and of loan collections. Fortunately there are funds available at Oberlin for such a program, and frequent exhibitions are carefully co-ordinated in the matter of time and content with the courses offered in the department.

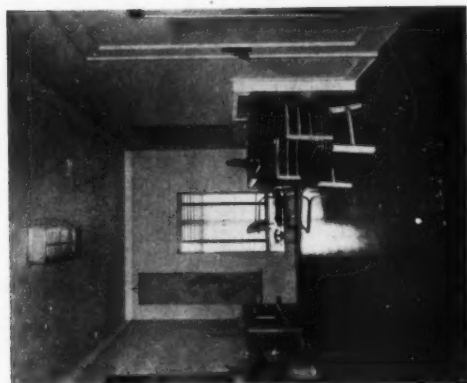
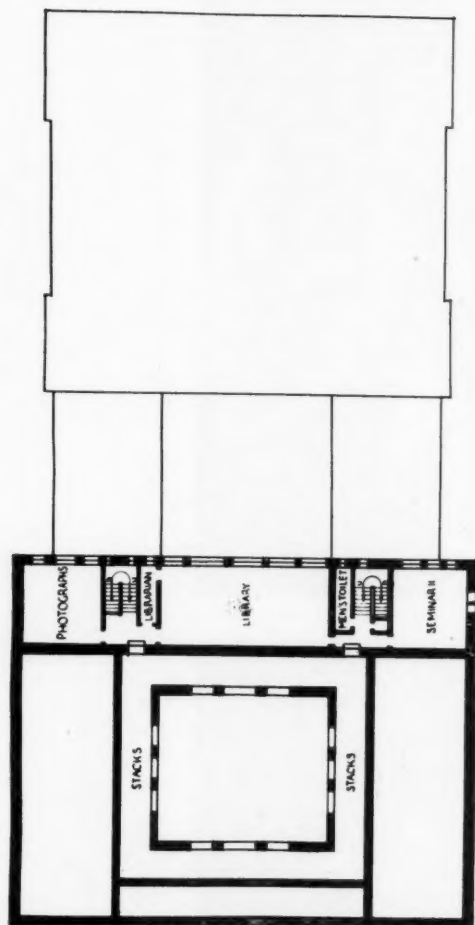


Fig. 12. Office of Curator



Fig. 13. Main Reading Room



# SECOND FLOOR PLAN

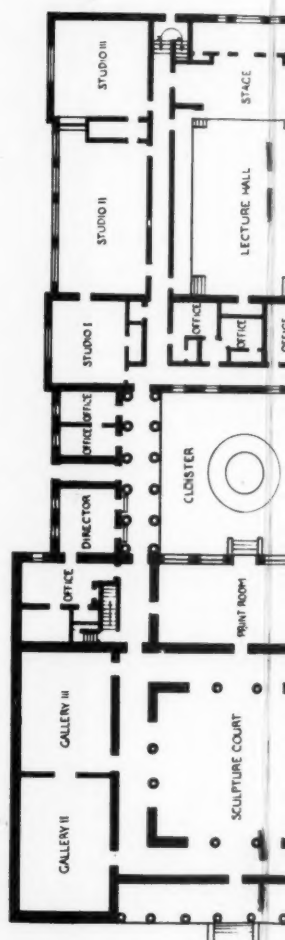


Fig. 4. Plan of





Students both in the history and practice of art thus derive a continuous stimulus from this source. A second function is that of adult education and of instruction for children in the schools. Lectures and gallery talks for members of clubs and societies visiting Oberlin are frequent and the members of the staff are available daily for docent work. Teachers in the public schools are encouraged to bring their classes to the museum and every effort is made to co-operate with them. Very important, also, is an organization known as "The Oberlin Friends of Art" which owes its origin very largely to the efforts of the curator of the museum, Mrs. King. It is a voluntary society, designed to further the interest in art in Oberlin through the annual dues of its members. The latter are varied enough to suit almost any purse. The annual income from them has been sufficient to make possible the purchase of paintings, drawings, prints and other objects of outstanding merit. Members of the society also have certain special privileges including a free subscription to the Bulletin and admission to special "opening nights" when new exhibitions or gifts are placed on display. They also receive announcements of all lectures and gallery talks and have the opportunity of purchasing season tickets for the Film Society at half price.\*

The Film Society is another organization connected both with the museum and the department. Its purpose is to bring outstanding films of all dates and countries to Oberlin. During the last few years, its annual program has included some six or eight evenings of such films. These have ranged in date from the earliest silent pictures to the present and have included outstanding examples from Mexico and all parts of Europe in addition to those made in this country. Much of the success of the society both in the matter of organization and program has been due to the efforts of the librarian of the department, Miss Ellen Johnson and of her assistant, Mrs. Richard Shafer, and to

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\*A list of the present membership appears on the last page of this Bulletin. Additional members are heartily welcomed and the director or the curator will be happy to send full information about the society upon request addressed to the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin, Ohio.

the co-operation of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Membership in the society is open first to students in the department, then to members of the Friends of Art and lastly to the general public. It is limited, however, to the capacity of the art building auditorium in which the films are shown.

#### THE MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

Previous bulletins have listed many of the objects in the museum collection,\* and it is hoped to print a comprehensive catalogue in the near future. Because of this, the strong temptation to introduce an account of the really outstanding art objects which the building contains will be resisted, and only a brief summary of the origin and growth of those collections given here.

Up to 1904 the college had no art collection of any consequence though it did own a few paintings and portraits. In that year, however, it accepted a bequest of Mr. Charles F. Olney of Cleveland of a large number of paintings and other objects. Most of these had been purchased in the eighties and early nineties and a few were of real museum quality. Fortunately there were no restrictions attached to the bequest and many items in it are gradually being sold and replaced with new pieces which are being accessioned in Mr. Olney's name. A little later the college received a group of Chinese and Japanese paintings and some ceramics from the Freer collection, and in 1915 Mr. Charles M. Hall, an Oberlin alumnus and the inventor of the present process for making aluminum, bequeathed to the college not only by far its largest single endowment, but also a carefully selected collection of some fifty oriental rugs and a number of excellent Chinese vases.

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\*Publications of the Allen Memorial Art Museum: Acquisitions from the R. T. Miller, Jr. Fund, June, 1941; Acquisitions 1941-42, May, 1942; The Prentiss Bequest, March, 1944; Bulletin of the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Volume I, Number 2, June, 1944; Bulletin, Volume II, Number 1, Exhibition of Still Life Paintings, 17th to 19th Century, and Recent Acquisitions, March, 1945; Bulletin, Volume II, Number 3, A Lydian Sarcophagus from Smyrna and Recent Acquisitions, June, 1945; Bulletin, Volume III, Number 1, Exhibition, "American Artists Discover America" and Recent Acquisitions, February, 1946; and Bulletin, Volume IV, Number 1, Recent Chinese Acquisitions, March, 1947.

It was almost immediately after this last bequest that the present building was begun. At its dedication in 1917, it received some important gifts in honor of its donor. These included a particularly fine Chinese horse's head, presented by Mr. Parrish Watson. With the collections just described as a nucleus, and with the new building as a stimulus, gifts and bequests became more numerous. Twenty-five canvasses, presented by Mr. A. A. Healy, then president of the Brooklyn Academy of Arts and Sciences, greatly improved the quality of the painting collection. Other donors also began to give to the museum objects of higher calibre. But the real importance of the museum dates from 1940. In that year a bequest of Mrs. A. A. Healy and a gift of Mr. R. T. Miller, Jr., made it possible for the college to begin to make its own purchases and thus to acquire works which were not only of museum quality but also added greatly to the interest and usefulness of the collection both for the general public and for the students in art courses. These objectives continue to figure in Oberlin's accession policy. From 1942 until the present, Mr. Miller has continued to make annual gifts of from \$25,000 to \$50,000 for art purchases and other museum purposes making him, second only to Mrs. Prentiss, the largest single contributor to the building and its collections. Full accounts of the accessions made from the Miller Fund, and of the very important bequest of paintings and prints from Mrs. Prentiss have been published in the previous numbers of this Bulletin already referred to. These bulletins have also listed the names and gifts of the many other benefactors who have helped to raise the Allen Memorial to its present prominence among college and university museums. Some of the largest of these donors have had no immediate connection with Oberlin. There is space here to mention only two of these, Mr. Robert Lehman of New York, and Mrs. Malcolm McBride of Cleveland whose continuing interest has been shown by periodical gifts of increasing importance. The college is most grateful for such interest and it is equally appreciative of the large number of its own former students and friends who, in steadily increasing numbers, are supporting the museum and enlarging its collections.



*Fig. 14. Jefferson Room*

#### THE LIBRARY

It is evident that even the finest museum is not a sufficient laboratory for a college department of fine arts. It must of necessity be supplemented by an extensive collection of written and illustrative material. A fine library is thus an imperative necessity. It is equally important that this library should be easily accessible at all times both to members of the staff and to students. An insistence that art books be placed in an art building is axiomatic if they are really to function as they should for reference and instruction. They are as essential departmental "apparatus" as that of the physics laboratory. Fortunately, this was recognized at Oberlin when the original building was planned, and the then librarian of the college, Dr. Azariah Root, supported the policy of transferring any art books which might be desired, from the main library to the room provided in Mr. Gilbert's plans, a generous and far sighted attitude on his part. But, as has been stated, this room soon

proved too small and when the changes of 1937 were planned, all classes were removed to the new building and the entire second floor of the museum given over to library purposes. The former large classroom (fig. 13) is now a general reading room. It contains the three specially designed walnut tables from the earlier library and has a long wall of shelves for such books and illustrative material as may be reserved for the separate courses. Other shelves contain selected reference works.

The smaller classroom (fig. 14) was recently redesigned in honor of Thomas Jefferson on the occasion of his bicentennial. As a part of this tribute, an effort is being made to acquire contemporary copies of all books on the fine arts which he at any time possessed. The list is now nearly complete and these works are housed in this room where they form the nucleus of a fairly large collection of books and other material dealing with American architecture. This includes many of the government blueprints of historic buildings and a considerable collection of photographs. Among these are some three thousand prints which Mr. I. T. Frary has generously permitted the college to make from his superb personal negatives. The room itself was primarily planned for use by students in the history of architecture and in architectural design but, like the entire library, it is open to the general public as well. In fact, there are few restrictions regarding the use of art books. Except for folios, bound periodicals and such material as may be needed for the reserve shelves, all books, photographs and color plates are freely loaned to individuals and organizations desiring them.

The third room along the east side of the building was originally planned for the exhibition of prints. It corresponds in size to the Jefferson memorial and now houses the major portion of the photographs, an extensive collection of color reproductions, a clipping file and several thousand sales catalogues, the last very largely the gift of Mr. Frits Lugt of The Hague. The room is also the workshop for mounting, cataloging and such similar tasks. Tentative plans have been made, however, to relocate this work space and these collections, and to convert this room into another adjunct of the library, perhaps devoted especially to the arts of costume and the stage.



*Fig. 15. Library Stacks*

The corridor around the sculpture court at this second story level (fig 15), was originally planned for exhibits but its relative inaccessibility and its lack of adequate lighting made it ill-suited for this purpose. By lining its walls with shelves, it has now been converted into most useful stacks, in which every book is as easily located and readily accessible as it would be in a private library. There are also desks along the inner wall which are reserved for graduate and major students and are so placed that they overlook the sculpture court and museum below.

The librarian's office (fig. 16) is also on this floor. It looks out along the full length of one of the corridors and also opens into the main reading room. It contains a card index in which every colored illustration in the entire library, whether in a book or periodical or individually mounted, is listed for easy reference.

The extent of library resources in the fine arts is very considerable. There are, in the art building proper, some twenty thousand volumes, at least two thousand color plates and more than fifteen thousand photographs. Included in these last is the Frary collection already mentioned and more than three thousand views of French mediaeval architecture from the author's own negatives. The main library and that of the Graduate School of Theology both have excellent collections especially in archaeology, which are always available for consultation or loan. Cards for these books are gradually being incorporated in the art library index so that the resources of the entire college in the field of art may soon be seen at a glance. Most of the books and photographs have been purchased since 1916 and there is therefore little "dead wood" among them. The size and scope of the library as a whole and the ready accessibility of its contents make it one of the principal collections in America, and its calibre is sufficiently high to attract advanced scholars to Oberlin. It has been built up largely through use of surplus income from Mrs. Prentiss' gift for a professorship and generous college appropriations. These, plus part of the income of the Prentiss bequest, promise to make it possible to keep it at least moderately up to date. But greatly increased prices render any gifts either of books, money or illustrative material exceedingly welcome. A number of donors have already made very valuable gifts of this sort for which the college is greatly indebted.

In addition to its normal functions, the library is serving the whole college and, to some extent, the community through its large loan collection of reproductions and of original paintings and prints. These are rented by the semester to members of the student body in general, and, when possible, to members of the faculty and to citizens of Oberlin. The success of this loan collection is very largely due to the art librarian, Miss Ellen Johnson. Her knowledge and training in the field have assured a very high standard both of selection and framing. The modest rental charges take care of normal upkeep and also make it possible both to add to the number of pictures and to increase





*Fig. 16.* Office of Librarian

the proportion of originals among them. It is difficult to overestimate the influence of this collection on the appearance of students' rooms and on the development of taste in the student body.

#### STUDIOS AND CLASSROOMS

Instruction in the fine arts at Oberlin is of three types, studio work in drawing, painting, sculpture, design and other fields, lectures in the history and theory of art and conferences or seminars. In remodelling the old studio wing, an effort was made not only to provide proper rooms for these classes but also to assign adequate space for offices, a slide room, and for exhibiting students' work.

Since two of the three original studios were quite inadequate in size, the space which they occupied was made over into three offices and a small entrance foyer, which now houses the nucleus of a water-color collection. Two of the offices are provided with small storerooms with running water and all three have overhead lighting from the former skylights. A fourth office was added in the basement story, so equipped that it could be used as a rest room if desired.

The whole northern side of the building has been given over to two stories of studios, six in all. The largest of these (fig. 17) has table desks for forty students, the number to which

studio sections are restricted. The studio equipment is, in the main, of the usual type but there are a few innovations. The tables in the large room have wood tops, made like drawing boards, which can be sanded to their natural finish when necessary. Each is fitted with two drawers with combination locks, making it possible for two students to use the same desk with privacy in the matter of materials. The leather seated chromium chairs were especially designed for strength and comfort. The sinks in two of the studios are laid up in colored tile to harmonize with the mastic floors and to avoid the ugliness of the usual porcelain type. Another small innovation is the insertion in the wall of recessed towel holders with small swinging panels beneath them and concealed containers, thus avoiding some of the mussiness of the average studio. The drawing stools might also be mentioned. These like the chairs, are of chromium with leather-covered sponge-rubber seats and they are of three different heights, making it possible for a moderately large class to work from a single model. Blackboards and a considerable expanse of cloth-covered wood wall are provided in each studio. Between the two largest studios there is a combined storeroom and show window, the latter so planned as to open into the smaller studio through a large sheet of plate glass. This makes it possible to display paintings or other objects under any desired lighting. In addition to the studios on the north side of the building, there are three large basement rooms on the south which may be used separately or thrown together through movable partitions. One of these is now in use for painting, one for architectural design and the third serves as a gallery for the considerable collection of casts which formerly occupied the central court and corridors of the museum.

A fair sized auditorium, two classrooms holding about fifty students each, and a small seminar provide for lectures and conferences. Since almost all classes require extensive use of illustrative material, the facilities for such visible instruction have received especial attention. In fact, it is in this respect that the Oberlin art building is probably in advance of any in the country.



*Fig. 17.* Corner of Studio

The museum and the library are primary factors in the study of art but the slide collection is basic in teaching, especially historical and analytical courses. Oberlin possesses one of the major collections in the country if not in the world. It already numbers more than seventy thousand slides of standard size, of which five hundred or more are in color, and more than five thousand of the new two inch type, the latter almost entirely in Kodachrome. In addition, a good start has been made on a collection of 16mm. films illustrating both the history and practice of art. A few thousand slides, acquired largely through the efforts of Professor Martin, formed the nucleus of this collection in 1916. The rest have been added since that date and the collection continues to grow at a relatively steady rate. Films, also, are being added in considerable numbers and one of the particularly interesting projects of the department, started this year under the direction of Mr. Paul B. Arnold, is the preparation of its own color films of the various processes involved in drawing, painting, sculpture and the graphic arts. The success

of this undertaking and the high quality of the slides and photographs is due in large measure to the ability and co-operation of the college photographer, Mr. Arthur E. Princehorn.

One of the most important innovations concerns the situation and arrangement of the slide room. (Fig. 18). This has been located between the two classrooms. In it are mounted four automatically operated lanterns, into which slides may be placed directly from the filing cabinets. Only when they are used in the large lecture hall or one of the seminars do the slides need to be removed from this room for any purpose. Work tables have been provided for labelling and repairs, and each teacher has his own desk for the preparation of lectures. Tables and desks are equipped with indirectly lighted glass panels to facilitate study and arrangement. Each desk is provided with shelves for books and for specially made wooden boxes in which slides may be laid aside for use by the individual



*Fig. 18.* Slide Room

teacher. The filing cabinets are of the standard sectional type manufactured by the Library Bureau. To make it easier to collect slides for a lecture, a stool and lighted stand have been mounted on a small platform which may be propelled to any place desired. The room also contains a small library of guides, dictionaries and other books for ready reference.

The cataloging and filing of such a large slide collection as that at Oberlin presented some problems. A system of labeling by category, period and country was first devised. Then, to prevent a slide from getting out of place, stripes in certain colors and positions are marked on its edge. These not only indicate the general classification to which the slide belongs but also make it possible to see at a glance if any slide is out of its own group. Except for mistakes in alphabetical order, the system is virtually foolproof. The collection has no index cards, the slides acting as their own index. To keep all slides accounted for, a teacher using those which are not in the field of his own courses, inserts pasteboard cards of a certain color in the spaces from which he takes them.

Because the classrooms and lecture hall were designed specifically for teaching art, they have been supplied with some unusual equipment. (Fig. 19). Experience through the years had shown the value of having projection apparatus as nearly automatic as possible, so that no operators would be necessary. Fortunately as early as 1916 the Charles Beseler Company of New York had devised an automatic projector which could be operated by remote control. Two of these were installed in the original building when it was built and four more were purchased for the new addition. Very recently, similar lanterns for 2"x2" slides have also been put on the market by Spindler and Sauge of Los Angeles, and one of these has now been added to the Oberlin equipment. Since the latter is easily portable, it may be used wherever needed. Special speakers' desks were designed for each of the lecture rooms. These are equipped not only with controls for the automatic lanterns but also with rheostats for raising and lowering the room lights, a whole series of switches for controlling special lights along the walls

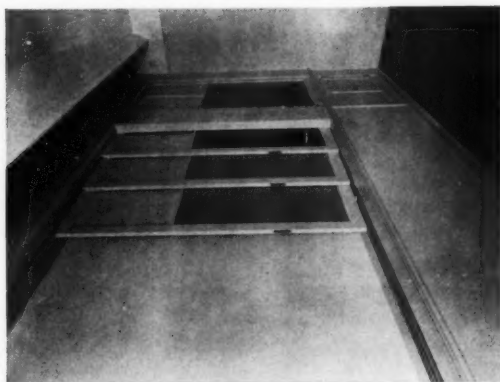
or across the front of the room, an electric pointer, two sound movie projectors, signal lights and buzzers. There are also extra circuits for additional apparatus. Each desk is equipped with a pointer, an electric clock, reading lights and a glass for drinking water. Control panels on the walls near the desks permit any radio program or any recorded music to be broadcast at will, either in a single lecture room or in any part of either building. This speaker system has been described in connection with the account of the director's office. By placing a microphone on the desk, the lecturer may make his voice audible in any part of either building or even out of doors. At present, this equipment is valuable chiefly in making possible a combination of music and pictorial illustration when desired. Should the number and quality of radio broadcasts in the fine arts improve or should television be perfected in such a way as to make it an important factor in art teaching, this installation at Oberlin may have more extensive uses.

There are certain other classroom innovations. Chromium arm chairs with leather cushions were designed for use in all three rooms. These are fitted with desk attachments which are firmly supported for writing or drawing and hinged so that they may be lifted when sitting or rising. They may also be completely removed by the sliding of a small bolt, and the chairs are then unencumbered and may be used for all ordinary purposes. Because each room had to have a screen broad enough to show two slides at once, the problem arose of providing blackboard and exhibition space in front of the class. This was solved by constructing blackboard and corkboard panels which slide across in front of the screen when needed. (Fig. 20). Concealed overhead lighting for these is controlled from the desk. This light is also utilized for a bank of maps and charts which are suspended from the ceiling, from which they may be drawn down into view. The maps are so arranged that from eight to sixteen successive epochs in history may be shown at one time. The screens are of beaded glass of Dalite manufacture.

The large lecture hall or auditorium (fig. 21) occupies the



*Fig. 19. Classroom*



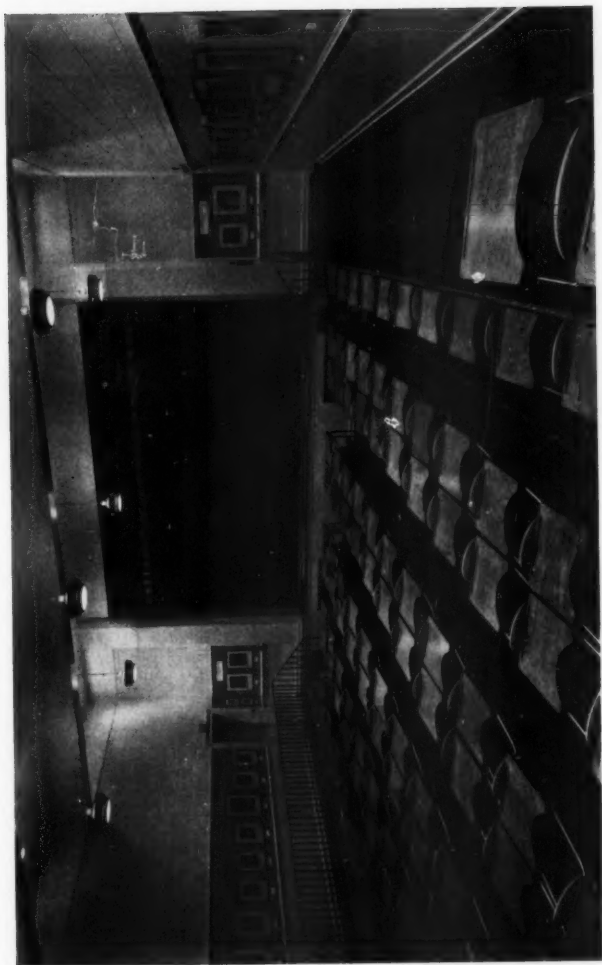
*Fig. 20. Detail of Classroom*

entire center of the new building. To give it proper height the main portion of the room has been dropped down about four feet below the general level with low galleries at floor level carried down each of the long sides and across the stage. This makes it possible to walk around the room even when the seats are in place. The walls along these galleries are provided with cork board panels for exhibition purposes. There are blackboards behind the small panels on either side of the stage and other boards may be rolled onto the stage itself when needed. The room is equipped mechanically like the other two classrooms but with certain additions. These include directional lights which may be turned on any wall, electric controls for opening and closing the large curtain across the proscenium arch and similar controls for raising or lowering the twenty-foot projection screen. There is a full height passage under each of the side galleries with openings into the central space through which the chair-desks may be passed when the room is used for public lectures or dramatic presentations. The normal seating capacity is about one hundred and ten, but as many as two hundred and fifty to three hundred may be accommodated when the desks are removed and chairs placed on the raised galleries.

Oberlin has as yet no theatre building and no regular courses in the dramatic arts, though the Oberlin Dramatic Association has a long history. With the feeling that, when a department of the drama is established, courses in costume and theatre design may well be added to the art curriculum, this auditorium in the art building has been provided with a stage and a fairly complete lighting system. This includes three separate circuits of foots, overheads and spots all with rheostatic control, the beam spots also having color wheels which are automatically operated from the main panel board.

A word should be added regarding the projection room which opens off the auditorium. This contains two automatic lanterns for standard size slides, one for Kodachromes, and two 16mm. sound projectors. It is also the central station for the speaker system. It is so planned that all of this equipment, as





*Fig. 21. Auditorium*

well as the proscenium curtain and the large screen, may be operated from this booth as well as from the speaker's desk. The lights, curtains and speaker system may also be controlled from back-stage. Other equipment in the projection room includes provision for rheostats to control the main house lights and for a two-way communication system with either the desk or stage. There is also a house telephone, various spare circuits, and storage cabinets for films, records, etc. All projection is through glass panels, thus eliminating noise while retaining visibility of the screen. These panels may be removed if desired but surprisingly enough, the glass does not seem to affect the clarity or brilliance of the image on the screen.

Only one specially designated seminar room has been provided in the new building, but the Jefferson Room, the smaller classroom, the print room and the larger offices are all suited for conference groups. This one room (fig. 22) has, however, been provided with special equipment. A large central table with leather seated chairs accommodates eight or ten students with space and comfort. Screens are provided at each end of the room, one for showing two slides at once, the other for use with a Spenser projector of the type which throws the image from in front of the lecturer to the screen behind him. A reflectorscope and a lantern for small slides, plus a lighted stand for photographs or plates, make possible almost any combination of visual instruction desired. Because of the easy interchangeability of their lenses, Spenser projectors are used for all portable lanterns. Of these, the department has nine, five for standard slides, two for Kodachromes, and two reflectorscopes.

#### THE DEPARTMENTAL CURRICULUM

A list of courses offered by the department of fine arts will be found as an appendix to this bulletin. A short commentary on these is sufficient, since this article is primarily concerned with the building and its material equipment.

In accordance with Oberlin's long tradition, instruction in the fine arts is strongly humanistic. Moreover, the integration of history and practice rather than their differentiation has



*Fig. 22.* Seminar Room

always been stressed. Thus, in studio courses, theory and history play a considerable role. The primary aim is not to produce professional artists, but rather to give to the student powers of observation and creation, based upon a foundation in the history of art, which will make it possible, not only for him to express himself with competence, but also to approach the work of others with judgment and intelligence. If he becomes seriously interested in the creative arts, he may take postgraduate studies leading to the M.A. But here, again, his technical skill must be supplemented by a considerable amount of scholarly research before he is granted the degree. Such training is perhaps best suited for prospective teachers but a number of students holding the B.A. or the M.A. from Oberlin have become distinguished artists in their own right. Others have continued their work in institutions granting the advanced degrees of M.F.A. or Ph.D.

As has often been the case in our American colleges, interest in the history of art originated in other departments. The indebtedness of Oberlin to one of its former deans, Mrs. Adelia A. Field Johnston, and to Professor Charles Beebe Martin has already been mentioned. Widely travelled and read, particularly for her time, Dean Johnston roused a deep interest in the fine arts both through her own enthusiastic personality and lectures, and through the many photographs which she added to the Oberlin collection or placed in college buildings or in those of the village. Her efforts were seconded and continued by Professor Martin who, as head of the department of classics, not only taught courses in ancient and renaissance art but also built up a surprisingly rich library of books, photographs and slides in these fields. Oberlin owes much of its present interest in the history of art to these two pioneers.

The present curriculum has many analogies with that at Princeton, but with the addition of a general introductory course over the entire field of western art including some lectures on esthetics, theory and practice. This is taught jointly by all members of the teaching staff and some outside lecturers, each teacher lecturing in the fields of his individual courses. It is not required of art majors but is strongly recommended. Approximately one quarter of all the students in the college elect this survey in either the freshman or sophomore year. An undergraduate major in the history of art varies from 36 to 40 credit hours in length. At least twelve of these may be in studio work and students are urged to avail themselves of this provision. Graduate work includes a thesis and all students must be able to read both French and German before they are granted an M.A. degree. The college has never offered work for the doctorate. Instruction in all courses is carried on by means of lectures, conferences, tests and assigned reading and study. Many Oberlin graduates hold important positions in museums, college teaching and allied fields.



## Conclusion

In spite of its length, this article is not an exhaustive,—though perhaps it has been an exhausting,—account of the fine arts at Oberlin. Certainly a few words should be added in conclusion as to the role which they and this building are playing in the life of the college. Besides the Baldwin lectures in art, made possible each year through a special fund bequeathed to the college for this purpose, the film series, and the productions of the O.D.A. already mentioned, the building is in almost constant use for lectures, conferences, concerts and other meetings held under the auspices of one or another of the college departments or other organizations. Its classroom and library facilities are frequently used by classes in the classics, esthetics, the modern languages, and for the new Capstone Course in the Humanities. It is thus an important center in the intellectual life of the the college as a whole. And it is a center of the social life as well. Both the museum and the classroom building are

in much demand for faculty and student receptions, departmental teas and social gatherings of organizations both in and out of the college.

In this enrichment of the intellectual and social life of Oberlin, the Allen Art Building is a living and a lasting memorial of that distinguished son of Oberlin to whom it is dedicated and of his gracious wife whose vision and generosity made possible its erection and assured its future. With their memory in mind and with gratitude to all those who, as students, members of the staff, friends and donors have played a part in giving to the fine arts their enviable place in Oberlin life, this account of the Dudley Peter Allen Memorial Art Building is dedicated.

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## COURSES IN THE HISTORY OF ART

Survey of the History and Appreciation of Art  
Ancient Architecture  
Ancient Sculpture (Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Aegean)  
Ancient Sculpture (Greek and Roman)  
Mediaeval Architecture  
Mediaeval Art in Western Europe  
Mediaeval Art in Eastern Europe  
Renaissance and Modern Architecture  
Painting and Sculpture of the Late Middle Ages and Early  
Renaissance in Italy  
Painting and Sculpture of the Later Renaissance in Italy and of  
the Renaissance in Spain  
Northern Painting  
Graphic Arts  
Modern Art in France and Spain  
Modern Art in Germany, England and America  
Contemporary Arts  
Scandinavian Art  
Oriental Art  
Museum Training  
Seminar in Ancient Art: Painting  
Seminar in Ancient Art: Archaeology  
Seminar in Architecture  
Seminar in Renaissance Art

## COURSES IN THE PRACTICE OF ART

Theory and Practice of Drawing  
Theory and Practice of Color  
Theory and Practice of Graphics  
Life Drawing  
Painting: Water Color  
Painting: Oils  
Sculpture  
Elements of Design: Textile Patterns  
Elements of Design: Lettering  
Advanced Design  
Composition  
Elements of Architectural Design  
Teachers' Training

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